

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
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R 100936Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5747
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY LONDON
USEC BRUSSELS 347
AMEMBASSY ROME

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 0996

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR TS AG
SUBJECT: ALGERIAN FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTEFLIKA ARRIVES
IN TUNIS

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED - ALGERIAN FOREIGN MINISTER
ABDELAZIZ BOUTEFLIKA ARRIVED IN TUNIS FEBRUARY 8,
TELLING PRESS THAT HE HAD COME ON A SPECIAL MISSION
FOR PRESIDENT BOUMEDIENE TO PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA.
THE VISIT HAD NOT BEEN ANNOUNCED BEFOREHAND. HE SAID
THAT HIS VISIT COINCIDED WITH THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE
FRENCH ATTACK ON THE TUNISIAN VILLAGE OF SAKEIT SIDI
YOUSSEF IN 1958. THE TUNISIAN MEDIA FEATURED BOUTEFLIKA'S
ARRIVAL PROMINENTLY, INCLUDING TRANSMISSION OF FULL
TEXT OF ARRIVAL STATEMENT ON FEBRUARY 9 RADIO NEWS.

2. IN HIS AIRPORT ARRIVAL STATEMENT, BOUTEFLIKA SAID
THAT BOUMEDIENE HAD SENT HIM TO INQUIRE ABOUT THE STATE
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OF BOURGUIBA'S HEALTH. BOUTEFLIKA WISHED BOURGUIBA
QUICK RECOVERY SO THAT HE COULD RESUME HIS ACTIVITIES
AT THE HEAD OF THE TUNISIAN STATE AS WELL AS AT THE
LEVEL OF THE GREATER MAGHREB. HE ADDED THAT THERE IS
MORE THAN JUST NEIGHBORLINESS BETWEEN ALGERIA AND TUNISIA,
"THERE ARE SO MANY TIES THAT UNITE US."

3. BOUTEFLIKA ALSO STATED THAT HE WOULD DISCUSS CHIEF POLITICAL ISSUES ON THE MAGHREBIAN AND INTERNATIONAL LEVEL. HE SAID THAT HIS VISIT WILL AFFORD AN OPPORTUNITY AS WELL AS TO EXCHANGE VIEWS ON THE NORTH-SOUTH DIALOGUE, ON THE SITUATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA, AND VARIOUS INTERNATIONAL PROBLEMS. END UNCLASSIFIED.

4. COMMENT: THE WARMTH OF BOUTEFLIKA'S STATEMENT ON RELATIONS WITH TUNISIA MAY INDICATE AN ALGERIAN DESIRE FOR IMPROVEMENT IN THOSE TIES WHICH HAVE BEEN TROUBLED SINCE LATE 1975. THE SAKIET SIDI YOUSSEF ANNIVERSARY WAS ALSO CELEBRATED AT THE SITE OF THE ATTACK WITH THE TUNISIAN REPRESENTATION HEADED BY MINISTER OF FINANCE MOHAMED FITOURI AND THE ALGERIANS HEADED BY COLONEL HECHMI HAJRICH, WALI OF GUELMA. LASTE YEAR, NO ALGERIANS APPEARED FOR THE CELEBRATION. ANOTHER REASON FOR BOUTEFLIKA'S VISIT MAY HAVE BEEN THE EURO-ARAB DIALOGUE, WHICH OPENS IN TUNIS ON FEBRUARY 10. ARAB PARTICIPANTS HAVE BEEN MEETING BEHIND CLOSED DOORS SINCE FEBRUARY 7, AND BOUTEFLIKA HAS NO DOUBT TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF THEIR PRESENCE IN TUNIS TO SOLICITATE SUPPORT FOR GOA VIEWS REGARDING FORTHCOMING MEETING.

5. WHILE WE DO NOT KNOW IF THERE IS ANY CONNECTION WITH BOUTEFLIKA'S VISIT, SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF PLO'S YASSER ARAFAT, DR. ISSAM SARTAWI, WAS ALSO IN TUNIS ON FEBRUARY 8. PRESS REPORTED THAT SARTAWI MET WITH PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA AND PRIME MINISTER NOUIRA FOR ALMOST AN HOUR AT 6 P.M. ON SAME DAY.

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